



THE BOUNDARY MARKER

The newsletter of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission

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WATER DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM GETS HIGH-TECH UPGRADE

The U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is currently implementing a new system for collecting flow data from the Rio Grande, Lower Colorado River, and Tijuana River. The system uses satellite technology to improve the timeliness and reliability of the data collected, leading to improvements in international water accounting, water deliveries, and flood control.

The International Boundary and Water Commission collects data related to the volume of water in the international rivers so that it can deliver water to each country in accordance with the Convention of 1906 and the 1944 Water Treaty and protect residents on both sides of the border from flood. By improving the timeliness of its data collection system, the Commission will perform its duties more effectively.

USIBWC Commissioner Carlos M. Ramirez sees many benefits to the new system, "This new technology will help us fulfill our treaty obligations by improving the timeliness and reliability of the data we need to do our job."

The USIBWC currently operates more than 60 gaging stations on the boundary rivers, tributaries, and other points where there are significant diversions or inflows. At some stations, employees take measurements using a hand-held device – at times while dangling over the river in a small cable car in

remote border areas. Although the work can be dangerous, it provides important data for the Commission.

Under the United States Section Hydrologic Telemetry Rehabilitation Project, new technology is being installed at more than 60 stations to enhance the existing system. Once it becomes fully operational in 2003, precipitation and river stage data will be collected at 15-minute intervals and transmitted every four hours. Eventually, the USIBWC hopes to post updated data on the internet several times daily.

In addition to the equipment installed at the rivers, the system includes satellite transmitters, an-



Hydro Aid Larry Peña wades in the river to do his job

tennae, and PC-based computer software. The equipment is manufactured by Sutron Corporation, a major supplier for other federal and local water management agencies. The USIBWC project was recently featured in the company's quarterly newsletter.



Antenna used by new system



MINUTE 308 SIGNED ON RIO GRANDE ISSUES

On June 28, U.S. Section Commissioner Carlos M. Ramirez and Mexican Section Commissioner Arturo Herrera Solis signed Minute 308, "United States Allocation of Rio Grande Waters During the last Year of the Current Cycle." The minute, which had been the subject of high-level negotiations in Washington, DC, provides for an immediate transfer to the United States of 90,000 acre-feet of water from Mexican storage at Amistad and Falcon International Storage Reservoirs to meet the urgent needs of South Texas irrigators. The minute also provides a framework for cooperative efforts to promote water conservation projects and sustainable management of the basin.

Under a 1944 treaty between the two countries, Mexico is required to deliver water to the United States from six of its tributaries to the Rio Grande. The treaty also provides for the United States to deliver Colorado River water to Mexico. Over the past decade, Mexico has incurred an unprecedented deficit in water deliveries to the United States. Efforts to address this issue have been a top priority for the IBWC in recent years and a major concern for President Bush, who has raised the matter directly with Mexican President Fox on a number of occasions. Minute 308 provides for discussions to continue through the IBWC regarding additional measures to be taken about

the water deficit.

Under the agreement, both governments indicate their support for water conservation projects and an interest in developing measures within the IBWC to ensure that these conserved waters on the Mexican side are conveyed to the Rio Grande. Additionally, the minute

gives support for drought planning and development of a binational sustainable management plan for the basin. To strengthen the IBWC's role in the area of sustainable management and drought planning, the minute provides for establishment of a forum for the exchange of information and advice to the Commission from government and non-government organizations in both countries, subject to funding.

A Joint Communique by the two governments states that the agreement, "contributes to resolving the water problems along the border taking into account immediate needs, as well as concrete actions to be taken in the medium and long term. In this way, both Governments will assure more efficient use of water in the Rio Grande basin, which will permit guaranteed supply for Mexican users, and compliance with the obligations established under the 1944 Treaty for the benefit of U.S. users."



Low levels at Falcon Reservoir leave boat dock on dry land

ARIZONA CITIZENS' GROUP MEETS

Southeast Arizona Citizens' Forum board members participated in their first meeting on July 8 in Sierra Vista. The USIBWC recently established the group to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community about agency projects in Southeast Arizona. At the meeting, staff briefed the board about USIBWC projects and responsibilities in the region.

Board members, who were selected by the agency, are: Diane Carper, Cochise County Health Department; John Hays, Santa Cruz County Flood Control District;

Andrew Laurenzi, natural resources consultant; Ben Lomeli, Friends of the Santa Cruz River; Regina Mahoney, retired from the field of environmental science; Carol Moore, Cochise County Bio-Terrorism Preparedness; Terry Sprouse, University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center; Robert Strain, Sierra Vista City Council, Upper San Pedro Partnership; and Jacque Zamora, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. USIBWC Principal Engineer Carlos Marin represents the agency on the board.



PROJECT OFFICES IMPRESS HEADQUARTERS STAFF

by Valerie Lindsey

As employees with less than a year with the IBWC, Isabel Coronel, Diana Forti, and myself were eager to see some of the IBWC projects and to meet the people whom we had been speaking with by telephone. Richard Peace bravely accepted the challenge of setting up the tour and guiding us.

Our first stop was the Lower Rio Grande Valley where we toured Retamal and Anzalduas Dams, and crossed into Mexico to Morillo Drain (badly in need of maintenance and repair). Retamal and Anzalduas Dams each span a beautiful and serene section of the Rio Grande. We learned about the drum gates and their use in regulating the river flow. Both dams are affected by river weeds which impede the normal water flow and alter the banks.

Our next stop was Falcon Dam and Reservoir under the expert guidance of Silverio Garza, Jr. and Mike Evans. Silverio took us through the Falcon Dam Power Plant, explaining how the turbines worked to generate electricity for several communities. We were impressed with how clean the plant was -- everything gleamed. Silverio proudly showed us the various items his staff developed and built (e.g., they installed new electrical panels themselves, saving about \$140,000 in installation costs). Everywhere, we saw evidence of the expertise and inventiveness of the Falcon staff. While at Falcon Dam, we observed the riprap and how they use



(l to r) R. Peace, V. Lindsey, D. Forti, I. Coronel at Nuevo Laredo International Wastewater Treatment Plant

buffalo grass on one side of the dam to secure the riprap naturally and prevent erosion. We also saw the original water line, several feet higher than it now is. Mike Evans continued our tour the following day, showing us recently refurbished gates. Walking across the bridge, we got to see first hand how the stop logs are lowered and stacked before the gate to be refurbished to temporarily block the water.

At Laredo, we crossed into Mexico to see the Nuevo Laredo International Wastewater

Treatment Plant. I'm probably the only nut who has always wanted to see one. I was impressed with how well the water was cleaned. It was well worth the heat we experienced.

Our final tour was another beautiful location, Amistad Dam. There is a small museum that explains the pictographs, wildlife, and history of the area. Bill Jeffers did an outstanding job of taking us throughout the dam and explaining all of their processes. In all, it was a wonderful and eye-opening tour. Valerie Lindsey is Chief of Financial Services.



Drum gate at Anzalduas Dam

PROMOTIONS AND NEW HIRES

Congratulations to recently-promoted USIBWC staff:

Gilbert Anaya.....	HQ Environmental Management
Cody Brite.....	Del Rio
Lloyd Canales.....	Falcon
Jose L. Garcia.....	American Dam
Ismael Guerra III.....	Falcon
Palmer Mullins.....	Falcon
Helen Quezada.....	HQ Budget

The USIBWC also welcomed the following new employees to staff:

Raul Ballesteros.....	HQ Public Affairs
Kurt Boede.....	Nogales
Efren Carrera.....	Falcon
Diana Forti.....	HQ Budget
Luis Garcia.....	Falcon
Sergio Lopez.....	Presidio
Nathan McSloy.....	Del Rio
Ruben Solorio.....	Del Rio

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